

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SCCT-01 SAM-01 SAB-01 DHA-02 SY-05

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P R 191225Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0105

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 4422

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, FR, LE

SUBJECT: FRENCH SECURITY PRESENCE

REF: PARIS 14432

1. FIRST SERIOUS THOUGHT ABOUT A FRENCH SECURITY PRSENCE GOES BACK TO LAST DECEMBER DURING DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN THE SYRIANS AND PRESIDENT FRANGIE'S REPRESENTATIVES. SYRIANS WANTED TO BE SOLE GUARANTORS OF LEBANESE SECURITY. FRANGIE WANTED EITHER THE FRENCH OR THE AMERICANS IN THE ACT. NOTHING CAME OUT OF THIS AT THE TIME, HOWEVER, AS THE SYRIANS INSISTED ON THEIR POSITION. IN ANY EVENT, THE ISSUE BECAME LESS IMPORTANT DURING THE SYRIAN-CHRISTIAN HONEYMOON, AND EFFORTS ON THE CHRISTIAN SIDE WERE DIRECTED MORE TOWARD GETTING U.S. CONCURRENCE ON SENDING IN
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ENOUGH SYRIAN TROOPS HERE TO DO THE JOB.

2. THE ABOVE EFFORTS WERE COMPLEMENTED BY EFFORTS AIMED AT FINDING AN ACCEPTABLE FRAMEWORK TO ALLOW FOR THE LONGER TERM PROBLEM OF ASSURING AN ADEQUATE SYRIAN PRSENCE SO LONG AS REQUIRED UNDER THE NEW PRESIDENT. THUS THE RECONSTRUCTION CONSORTIUM IDEA, IN WHICH FRANCE AND THE U.S., ALONG WITH SYRIA AND SAUDI ARABIA OR KUWAIT, WOULD BE REPRESENTED AND IN WHICH SYRIA WOULD BE DELEGATED THE SECURITY ASPECTS CONNECTED WITH THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE COUNTRY.

3. WITH THE DETERIORATION OF THE SITUATION, THE IDEA OF A DIRECT FRENCH SECURITY ROLE IS NOW BEING REVIVED, THANKS NO DOUBT TO MARONITE PRESSURE ON INFLUENTIAL FRENCH SOURCES. IT IS DIFFICULT TO DETERMNE WHAT WILL COME OUT OF THIS, BUT, IF THE UNANIMOUS APPROVAL OF ALL PARTIES CONCERNED IS A SINE QUA NON, THEN THE FOLLOWING SHOULD BE NOTED:

A) JUMBLATT HAS ANNOUNCED PUBLICLY THAT HE IS OPPOSED BOTH TO WESTERN TROOPS AND TO ARAB TROOPS.

B) THAT THE PALESTINIANS WOULD FAVOR FOREIGN FORCES, AT LEAST A WESTERN FORCE, APPEARS IMPROBABLE.

C) THE CONSERVATIVE MUSLIMS ARE STRONGLY OPPOSED TO ANYTHING THAT SMACKS OF INTERNATIONALISM FOR FEAR THAT THIS WOULD BE A PRELUDE TO PARTITION.

D) SYRIA HAS BEEN UNIFORMLY INSISTING ON AN EXCLUSIVE ROLE IN THE SECURITY FIELD, RELUCTANT EVEN TO SHARE THIS ROLE WITH OTHER ARAB STATES.

E) IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT THE NEIGHBORING ARAB COUNTRIES WOULD AGREE TO A WESTERN PRESENCE. INDEED, AS A RESULT OF SYRIAN OPPOSITION SO FAR, THEY HAVE NOT EVEN BEEN ABLE TO AGREE ON AN ARAB FORCE.

4. DESPITE THE ABOVE, THE SITUATION IS SO SERIOUS THAT ANYTHING COULD HAPPEN AND PERHAPS SYRIA HAS REACHED THE POINT WHERE IT WOULD BE WILLING TO SURRENDER EXCLUSIVITY IN THE FIELD OF SECURITY. YET SURRENDERING THIS EXCLUSIVITY IN FAVOR OF THE FRENCH, AND GETTING THE OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES TO GO ALONG, STILL SEEMS FAIRLY REMOTE.

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